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By- Haller, Emil J.; Thorson, Sondra J.

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The purpose of this paper was to determine the effect of the school's structure upon three aspects of the student's political socialization: community, regime, and authorities. Age level divisions foster a sense of community in and out of school, and pupil-teacher authority relationships establish attitudes toward authorities and norms of behavior expected in a system (regime). Social-psychological consequences are inferred from these structural attributes. From age cohorts, children establish a relationship among their equals and a society of peers which permit empathy. Through the pupil-teacher relationship, children expect nonfamily authority figures to behave universalistically and benevolently. The structure also promotes the child to develop a sense of personal efficacy. The implications for the modern political system are as follows: (1) A sense o f community and ability to empathize with peers are essential. (2) The ability to act in terms of relevant categories and universalism are central to norms in a regime which stresses equality before the law and the rule of the majority. (3) Attitudes toward authorities are important in maintaining stability. (4) Personal efficacy of citizens is basic to a popularly controlled system. Research is conclusive in demonstrating that elementary school age children are not apolitical. (JS)

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THE POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF CHILDREN AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL[1]

Emil J. Haller

and

Sondra J. Thorson

Department of Educational Administration

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

A political system can persist only as long as its allocations of values are accepted as authoritative and binding. For this reason the creation and maintenance of support for the system is crucially important. Political systems are cultural products; they must be imparted anew to each generation. Moreover, attitudes conducive to the support of these systems must be passed on from generation to generation if they are to endure. "Fundamentally, the theoretical significance of the study of socializing processes in political life resides in its contribution to our understanding of the way in which political systems are able to persist, even as they change, for more than one generation."[2]

Research has revealed that the child begins to acquire certain political orientations at a very early age.[3] He becomes aware of figures of political authority such as the President and the policeman, and he gradually builds a

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[1] Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Illinois, February, 1968.

[2] David Easton and Jack Dennis, "The Child's Image of Government," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 361 (September 1965), 41.

[3] Robert D. Hess and Judith V. Torney, The Development of Political Attitudes in Children (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1967).

more complex conception of government.[4] But even before he develops a more elaborate notion of what the government is, he acquires very definite--and positive--feelings about governmental authorities.[5] Figures such as the President and the mayor are seen by the majority of children as benevolent and protective.

From the outset the family has been considered an important--some would say the most important--agent of political socialization. Especially in studies of voting behavior and party identification, the family has been found to be extremely influential.[6] It has also become customary for students of political socialization to attribute to the school a role in the transmission of political orientations. We have no objection to this assertion. What we find unfortunate is the tendency to carry the examination of the school's socialization role no farther than mere assertion.

In most cases, research has focused mainly on the child's political orientations, leaving open the question of <u>how</u> the school affected their acquisition. Many investigators appear to conceive of the school as a bare stage on which a few politically relevant acts take place. Such obviously political phenomena as the daily pledge of allegiance and participation in class decisions have received attention as significant elements in the socialization process. Again, we have no quarrel with the conclusion that these acts are significant. However, we feel that the conception of the school implicit in much of the

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4 David Easton and R.D. Hess, "The Child's Political World," <u>Midwest Journal of Political Science</u>, 6 (1962), 229-46.

5 In addition to references 2-4 above, see Fred I. Greenstein, "The Benevolent Leader: Children's Images of Political Authority," <u>American Political Science Review</u>, 54 (1960) 934-43.

6 See Herbert H. Hyman, <u>Political Socialization</u> (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1959) Chapter 4, for a review of the literature relating to parental party identification and party identification of children.

literature is inadequate. The few acts singled out as politically relevant do not occur in a vacuum, but in a unique social context. The school is not an empty stage but an elaborately structured institution. We contend that important as these obviously political acts are, more important for political socialization is the context in which they occur.

Our purpose in this paper is to suggest mechanisms by which the social structure of the school influences the political socialization of the child. We will discuss in detail two aspects of the school's structure: the age-cohort division of pupils and the pupil-teacher authority relationship.[7] We will then examine some of the social-psychological consequences for the child which may be inferred from these structural characteristics. Finally, these consequences will be linked to the learning of politically relevant attitudes and beliefs. In the sense that this political learning is an unanticipated consequence of organizational structure, one might refer to the schools' latent function of political socialization.[8] To describe this aspect of schooling as "latent" is not to say that educators have been unaware of their role in politicizing children. Usually, however, that role has been conceived in the general sense of "promoting good citizenship"(that is, "proper" behavior), or in the specific sense of directly teaching politically relevant information (that is, history and government).

Our argument, in brief, is as follows: The school, considered as a social structure, is made up not only of roles and their interrelationships, it also

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7 At several points this analysis is indebted to that of Dreeben and Parsons; See Robert Dreeben "The Contribution of Schooling to the Learning of Norms," Harvard Educational Review, 37 (Spring, 1967), 211-37, and Talcott Parsons, "The School Class as a Social System," in Education, Economy and Society, (eds.) A.H. Halsey, Jean Floud, and C.A. Anderson (New York: Free Press, 1961), 434.

8 Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1957), p. 51.

consists of a culture of meanings, values, and norms. Children who are part of (take roles in) this social structure internalize these meanings, values, and norms through a process of role-taking in the Meadian sense. A feeling of community, the norms of universalism and equality, and expectations regarding the behavior of authorities are aspects of the school's culture which are thus internalized by pupils. This culture is congruent with similar meanings, values, and norms which are part of the political system, and this congruence facilitates the child's induction into that system. Thus, the social structure of the school facilitates the political socialization of children.

We do not take the position that the school is an essential institution in the political socialization process. To do so would be to fly in the teeth of historical evidence. After all, political systems have persisted for generations in societies without formalized educational institutions equivalent to those in modern states. Our point in this paper is simply that the structure of this institution has a positive function in the political socialization of the young.

Let us clarify terms. Following Rose, we define a social structure as a cluster of meaningfully related roles with attendant clusters of meanings, values, and norms governing the interaction of members of the structure. Structures may be as large as a state or society and as small as a dyad. A structure and its related roles are two aspects of the same phenomenon, viewed from a standpoint of the individual or the social setting.[9]

The term "political socialization" here means the process by which children come to internalize some of the fundamental norms, attitudes, or beliefs

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[9] Arnold M. Rose, "A Systematic Summary of Symbolic Interaction Theory," Human Behavior and Social Processes by Arnold M. Rose (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1962), pp. 10-11.

which govern the political process. We are not concerned with the learning of factual material through direct teaching (for example, the contents of the Declaration of Independence), though such learning is also part of the socialization process. We are concerned with the indirect inculcation of normative political orientations through the process of schooling.

We shall distinguish three aspects of the political system: community, regime, and authorities,[10] all of which are objects of socialization. Within the framework of the political system, community refers to the "members seen as a group of persons bound together by a political division of labor ... who are drawn together by the fact that they participate in a common structure and set of processes, however tight or loose the ties may be."[11] A sense of community, therefore, refers to the "we-feeling" which unites the members of a political system. We shall argue that the development of these cohesive bonds is facilitated by the structural arrangements of the elementary school.

A second aspect of the political system is the regime. Regime may be defined as the regularized method by which political relationships are ordered. The regime acts as a set of constraints on political interaction. Norms are among these constraints. "Norms specify the kinds of procedures that are expected and acceptable in the processing and implementation of demands."[12] For example, in a modern Western democracy, although the norm may not have been formalized into law, the appointment of relatives to political positions would be considered a violation of the norm against nepotism.

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10 David Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life (New York: John Wiley, 1965)

11 Ibid., p. 177.

12 Ibid., p. 193.

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Finally, the term "authorities", as used by Easton, refers to political authorities, that is, those who occupy political roles. Authorities include those members of a political system who engage in its daily affairs, who are recognized as being responsible for political matters, and whose actions are normally accepted as binding when they act within the limits of their roles.[13] The generation of support among the young for these authorities is also an aspect of their political socialization. Not only must children develop a sense of cohesion with other members of the system (community), and a set of norms governing the manner in which political decisions are to be made (regime), they must also develop a level of support for those who make such decisions: the authorities.

The first aspect of school structure on which we shall focus is the age-grade division of pupils. By this we mean the nearly universal tendency to define initial school attendance solely on the basis of age: five-year-olds may attend kindergarten, four-year-olds may not. Thus, children are drawn into the school in age cohorts. There they are divided more or less randomly (at least from the child's perspective) into groups of approximately thirty. These groups then progress through their elementary years in a fairly uniform fashion, that is, ten months in a grade, followed by a promotion to the next grade, and so on. Thus, the initial age-cohort structure remains intact at least for the first six or eight years of a child's school experience. (This is not to say that the group's membership remains intact.)

This passage through the grades, coupled with existing arrangements for special subject teachers (for example, music, gym), provides each pupil with

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[13] Easton, op. cit., p. 212.

the opportunity to become extensively familiar with the teaching role and several of its incumbents. The status of this role in the institution and its power vis à vis other roles such as those of principal and pupil can be assessed. Similarly, this regularized passage ensures that each pupil experiences a sequential variation in his own status. For example a fifth grader may contrast his present status with his former status as a fourth grader.

Finally, the age-cohort division of pupils has a powerful impact on the play groups which are formed outside the school. By ensuring interaction within the classroom, sentiments arise which lead to the formation of virtually age-identical play groups off the school grounds.[14] Indeed, grade provides children with a proxy variable for maturity. Sixth graders may bar fifth graders from their activities for being "too little," although the ostracized may be fully as mature as the included. (This is not to say that children would not form age-equivalent play groups were there no schools. Obviously developmental interests and capacities promote their formation. The point is that the school, by ensuring interaction among age cohorts, formalizes and regularizes the formation of such groups.)

A second structural feature of the school is the authority relationship of the teacher and the class. In the classroom, relatively large groups of children are assembled under the supervision of one adult who is responsible for their behavioral as well as their cognitive development. As a result, there is a peculiar tension in the teaching role. On the one hand, in order to control thirty children, teachers must remain somewhat distant from their charges, applying standards universalistically to all members of the class.

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[14] George C. Homans. Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), p. 54.

Indeed, perhaps nothing will demean a teacher's position with her class more quickly than having a "pet." On the other hand, teaching itself, that is, imparting information, may be best accomplished within a close particularistic relationship with students. To use Waller's terms, teachers must alternate between the roles of "taskmaster" and "good fellow."[15] This tension is commonly felt by teachers who assert that a teacher should be close to his students, but not too close.

As the undisputed leader of the class, the teacher originates, defines, directs, and evaluates the majority of classroom tasks. The performance of these tasks by the pupils is necessarily public and hence accessible to both the teacher and peer group. Performance is public because maintaining simultaneous control over thirty children effectively prevents a heavy reliance on "private" teaching techniques, for example, tutorials. Instead, "class discussions" become a normal teaching procedure. Since these discussions are public, each pupil's performance can be evaluated by his peers as well as by the teacher. Similarly, rewards for achievement and for "proper conduct" are often publicly administered. Cognitive and behavioral development along the lines prescribed by the school is facilitated by the public nature of this reward system. A student need not personally perform an act to learn its reward value.

Similarly, because of her responsibility for a large group, the teacher's allocation and evaluation of classroom tasks must be based on universalistic criteria. A task is normally assigned to all members of the class, and each pupil's performance on the task will be measured against the same standard.

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[15] Willard Waller, The Sociology of Teaching (New York: John Wiley, 1965), pp. 383-386.

This universality of treatment enforces a standardization of behavior among the pupils. Standardization of behavior is also used by the teacher as a means of controlling large numbers. "Lining up" is a classic example of control through standardized behavior. Maintenance of control over thirty pupils requires that they display an attitude of relative docility toward authority: docile behavior is enforced and rewarded in classrooms.[16]

The effect of these patterns of interaction is a clear demarcation of the status and power differences between the teacher and the pupils. In his day-to-day experience in the classroom, the child learns to accept as appropriate and legitimate a power distribution in which the teacher's role is the exercise of leadership and the child's role is one of compliance and relative docility. The child also becomes aware of a further power dimension which extends beyond the classroom itself. He is introduced to a hierarchy of authority in which the school superintendent occupies a position of power which transcends the power of the teacher and even that of the principal.[17] The child's perception of this hierarchy may be dim and incomplete--the superintendent may be a remote and misty figure--but the pupil recognizes his own vulnerability in the face of this "power elite." Even though this power may never be exercised, its extent is obvious. The rebellion of a recalcitrant child can often be quashed by the mere threat that the power of the principal will be invoked, <u>without the child having previously experienced its invocation</u>. The structure of power in the school is such that the child's place is at the bottom of a steep pyramid. Everyday classroom procedure serves to continually remind him of his position and to encourage him "to learn his place."

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16 Edgar Friedenberg, "New Value Conflicts in American Education," <u>The School Review</u>, 74 (Spring, 1966), 66-94, provides a review of several authors who have made this point.

17 The line of command need not end with the superintendent and may, in the child's conception, extend as far as the President. Cf. Greenstein, <u>op. cit.</u>

Let us turn to some of the social-psychological consequences which we infer from these structural attributes. We have noted the age-cohort pattern of pupil induction to elementary schools. This mode of induction is utilized because it presumably narrows the span of mental maturity represented in a group of incoming pupils. With the exception of a very few pedagogical tasks, teachers may then behave as if all pupils were equal and comparable. (In fact, disabusing Johnny of the notion that he is someone special is one of the major functions of kindergarten teachers.) Thus each child, often for the first time, is confronted with a new class of relationships: relationships among equals.

This equality and comparability is further pointed up by the public nature of pupil-teacher interaction. The nearly absolute lack of privacy in classrooms effectively prevents a teacher's particularism from going unnoticed by her class. The public allocation and evaluation of tasks helps ensure that pupils perceive their equality and comparability. Finally, because of the tendency for out-of-school friendships to form on the basis of classroom interaction, these groups of equal and comparable children tend to form again after the closing bell, further extending a child's opportunity to perceive his equality with others.

Thus the child finds himself in a social structure radically different from the family. In the family each child is (in most cases) a different age, and age provides a basis for differentation among members. Big sister is ten years old and, therefore, she is accorded the privileges (nine o'clock bedtime) and the responsibilities (watching the baby) which are appropriate to her age and status. Little brother is only five, therefore his bedtime is seven o'clock but because he is "only a baby," his tantrums are tolerated. Because of the age structure of the classroom, distinctions among members cannot be made on this basis. All members are considered equal and comparable, and share the same privileges and responsibilities.

Perhaps one of the most important consequences of this equality and comparability is the development in each child of a "generalized other" of equals. This phrase refers to the conception of role-taking advanced by George H. Mead.[18] The child develops the capacity not only to imagine himself in another's role, but also to evoke simultaneously in himself the concerted behavior and attitudes of a whole group, even of a society. Individuals are thereafter able to engage in joint activity with their fellows because each is able to perceive himself and control his behavior from the viewpoint of all the others. Each person becomes a "society in miniature."[19]

The generalized other whose development is facilitated by the school's structure might be termed "the other-as-equal." That is, the school structure provides each child with a setting in which he must adopt the perspective of a society of peers. Internalized, this perspective allows the child to take the role of all members of such a society. In the role of the other, he can judge the actions of others and himself from his society's viewpoint. The rightness or wrongness of his own and others' actions can be measured against the criterion of acceptability to his peers. The family structure does not provide a setting in which the same other-as-equal perspective is possible.

Taking the role of the other also implies the development of empathy in children. In fact, for Mead the two processes are identical. The same aspects of school structure which facilitate the development of a generalized other of equals also facilitates the corresponding ability to empathize with this internalized society of peers. Such structural features as the regularized passage through the grades and the public nature of classroom performances ensure that each child has ample opportunity to "put himself in the other

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[18] Mind Self and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), p. 152

[19] Tamotsu Shibutani, "Reference Groups and Social Control," in Rose, op. cit., p. 132.

fellow's shoes." For example, because discussions are public, the embarrassment of less competent pupils before a teacher's insistent questioning can be felt even by the most academically able. Thus, the development in each child of a generalized other of equals, and the ability to take its perspective, are important social-psychological consequences of the school's social structure.

Similarly, the authority structure of the school discussed above has several social-psychological implications for pupils. First, for many children, the school provides the child with his first regularized contact with non-family authority figures. Prior to attending school, contact with these other authorities (for example, policemen) is probably too sporadic for the child to form any clear expectations for their behavior. What are these expectations?

It was noted above that universalism is one of the most salient norms governing the behavior of classroom teachers vis à vis their pupils. Presumably teachers believe that they must adhere to this norm in order to control thirty children in a public setting. We infer that their adherence to this norm gives rise to childrens' expectations that non-family authority figures should behave universalistically. Indeed, preliminary findings in our research indicate that violations of this norm by teachers are strongly rejected by pupils as young as nine.

A second consequence which we infer from the authority structure of the school is the development in children of the expectation that non-family authority figures will behave in a benevolent fashion. This inference derives from two sources. First, there is the pervasive value placed on education and schooling both by the general society and by teachers. This valuation is directly conveyed to children by parents and teachers: "school is good for you." Therefore what teachers--the school's authorities--do, they do

because it is good for children. To the degree that this attitude is inculcated in the young, we would expect that they would develop the expectation that authority is exercised for the benefit of subordinates. (The equivalent ideology in families, that parents act for the benefit of their children, undoubtedly reinforces any tendency to believe in the good intentions of authority figures.) Secondly, the dual nature of the teaching role, requiring both universalistic and particularistic relationships, may reinforce childrens' beliefs that authority figures have their best interests at heart. This particularism--the warmth and closeness teachers believe they must evidence in order to teach--tempers the social distance between them and their charges, and prevents the child's first contact with bureaucracy from being a chilling experience. Pupils learn that every Mr. Squeers is at least occasionally a Mr. Chips.

Finally, a third consequence of the authority structure of the classroom is that it makes possible the development of a sense of personal efficacy in children. The child is provided with frequent opportunities to influence both an authority and peers. The succession of teachers each child experiences as he progresses through school allows him to learn that influence techniques which work in one situation or with one teacher will not necessarily work a second time or with another authority. Thus the development of a repertoire of techniques is promoted. Equally important is the opportunity to learn that techniques effective within the family not only may <u>not</u> work, they may backfire in the context of a universalistic relationship. Similarly, the peer groups fostered by the school's social structure provides the child with the opportunity to develop a further class of influence techniques appropriate to a group of peers. Thus, we suggest that the growth of a sense of personal efficacy is fostered by the school.

We have argued that the social structure of the school facilitates several social-psychological developments. First, we have pointed out that it promotes in children the development of a generalized other of equals. A corollary to this is the ability to empathize with these equals. Second, we have suggested that certain expectations with regard to non-family authority figures are fostered by this structure. Specifically, it was proposed that children develop expectations that authorities will behave universalistically and benevolently, and that they are to some degree responsive to their subordinates. We turn now to the implications of these developments for the political system.

The development of a sense of community is perhaps theoretically and empirically prior to the development of regime norms. Unless individuals are structurally connected and interact with one another, there is no need to develop rules of procedure. In the absence of <u>any</u> sense of community on the part of the putative members, we are driven to conclude that no political system actually exists. It is precisely this problem--the creation in the "members" of a sense of community--that faces the political leaders in developing nations. An established nation faces a similar problem in having to inculcate a sense of community among an ever renewing membership.

One aspect of the political socialization of the child must be the development in him of a sense of community. In some sense the family, especially the extended family, provides the child with a ready-made community. He does participate, as a member of a group, in a "common structure and set of processes." However, two distinctions must be drawn between the sense of community in the family, on the one hand, and the political system on the other. First, the family is a subsystem within the political system as a whole. If there were a strong sense of community within each of the families in the larger political system, the ties to the subsystems might diminish, preclude,

or destroy the ties with the system itself. This is, in fact, the effect of tribalism in many African states and of strong family loyalties in the Philippines.

A second and perhaps more important difference between the community of the family and that of the political system is rooted in the very bases of their existence. In the family the basis for membership is, obviously, kinship. The family might be called a natural, or biological community, comparable to animal communities--herds, packs, and so on. As such, it is a product of natural evolutionary development in the animal world. A political system is not a product of biological evolution in this sense, but is an aspect of culture: it is man-made, a conscious creation or invention. It is, in this sense, artificial. The development of support for the family, and a sense of belonging to it, are almost inherent in family processes, but a sense of community and support with respect to the political system must be created. We suggest that the structure of the school may make it especially suitable for the development of this sense of political community.

Hess and Torney have shown that early in the child's elementary school years he develops strong ties to the nation.[20] Most important, such ties precede any clear idea of what the country is. Very young children nearly unanimously agree with the assertion, "America is the best country in the world," without any clear idea of what "America" or "the country" is. The flag and other symbols appear to be crucial points for that attachment.[21] Herein lies the importance of the pledge of allegiance, so often noted by those who discuss the political socialization of children. However, it is not the flag itself or the recitation of the pledge _per se_ which is important, but it is

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[20] _Op. cit._, p. 26.

[21] _Ibid._, p. 28.

the fact that the ritual is performed together in a society of peers. The national anthem and the pledge, which routinely start each day, serve as a cohesive force uniting equals with a common symbol of their equality. In fact, since these rituals are some of the earliest common activities of newly inducted children, they not only create bonds among peers, they may assist in creating the concept of peers.

Taking the role of a society of peers is one of the most important abilities required of citizens in a modern political system. In such a system, it is necessary that each person judge his own political actions from the perspective of all other citizens. His attitudes toward his own demands on the system must reflect their attitudes. He must feel what they feel, that is, he must empathize with them. According to Mead this process is the foundation of society: it is what makes joint human activity possible. In a modernized nation, the inculcation of a reference group of peers is perhaps one of the most important political functions of the elementary school, for it is the inculcation of a prototypical political society, and a foundation for the sense of political community among each new generation of its recruits.

Once there is a sense of community the regime norms become relevant. It becomes necessary, once one is a participant, to learn the methods and procedures which govern and constrain participation.

One of the norms that governs a great deal of the behavior of both teacher and pupils in the classroom is that of universalism.[22] It is a norm thoroughly learned in the first years of schooling. Essentially, it refers to the expectation that individuals <u>should</u> be treated as members of categories; for example, all members of the class should have the same rights and privileges.

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[22] Dreeben, "The Contribution of Schooling to the Learning of Norms," <u>op. cit.</u>

As was noted earlier, children are grouped on the basis of age equality. The teacher enforces various forms of standardization. Assignment and evaluation of tasks are done according to universalistic criteria. For all but a few of the school's pedagogical purposes, all children in a class must be treated as equals. Implicit in the norm of universalism is the need to categorize, that is, to submerge individual differences among a group and to isolate a relevant shared characteristic. In the class, most work is assigned equally to those who share the relevant characteristics of age and grade, regardless of difference in other characteristics which are judged to be irrelevant, say, sex, religion, and wealth. Progression from grade to grade emphasizes differences between categories and similarities within each category.

> Both within the classroom and within each grade, age and, to a lesser extent, other personal and social characteristics provide a basis for discovering both similarities and differences in categorical terms. The existence of grade levels, distinguished primarily by the demandingness of work and demarcated by the device of yearly promotion, and the progression of pupils through them year by year make it possible for children to learn that within the context of the school certain qualities that determine their uniqueness as persons become subordinated to those specific characteristics in which they are alike. Thus, fourth and fifth graders, despite their individuality, are judged according to specific criteria of achievement; and the content and difficulty of their assigned tasks are regulated according to the developmental considerations symbolized by grade. The fourth grader having completed the third grade can grasp the idea that he belongs to a category of persons whose circumstances differ from those of persons belonging to another. [23]

The norm of universalism and the capacity to act in terms of relevant categories are central to a number of the regime norms of modern societies. Political equality rests on the assumption that despite differences which may exist among citizens, the relevant criterion for judging their rights and

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[23] Ibid., pp. 234-35.

responsibilities is their common characteristic, that is, the fact that they are all members of the category "citizen." For example, with respect to the right to vote, characteristics such as wealth, religion, intelligence and race are judged to be beside the point. All adult citizens are entitled to vote; what determines enfranchisement is simply membership in the category "citizen."

Universalism is at the heart of the notion of equality before the law, which is implicit in the concept of "the rule of law and not men." Equity and fairness prescribe that the same standard be applied to all in like circumstances. Justice is portrayed as a blindfolded goddess impartially weighing the case before her. In the same way, the judge himself is but the tool through which the law is administered--it is not with the man on the bench that the decision rests, rather it is the law itself which reaches the verdict. In the classroom the teacher is expected to function in the same manner as the impartial judge. The child learns to expect that his work will be judged according to its merits and against the same standard set for his fellow students. Whether or not the teacher likes him, whether he is rich or poor, or whether he is the classroom menace should not enter into the consideration and evaluation of his academic performance. Equality before the law and equality before the teacher rest upon the same assumption, that is, that a decision or evaluation is just only so long as it is made according to a universal standard applied impartially to all cases.

In the classroom the students are evaluated by the teacher according to how well they perform the tasks assigned to them. The criterion of achievement fosters in the child an acceptance and approval of universal as opposed to personalistic standards. The child learns that one must judge a man by what he does, not by who he is. Similarly, the regime dictates that merit, performance, ability, and achievement are the criteria by which political

authorities are to be evaluated and chosen. The application of personalistic criteria--divine right, family ties, political favoritism, or patronage-- is regarded as illegitimate. A democratic regime which specifies popular choice as the legitimate method for the selection of leaders must also specify the standards against which the people are to measure prospective authorities. Equally important, the people must internalize these standards and actually employ them in making their decisions. The congruence of the achievement standard in the school and the political regime may facilitate and encourage both the internalization and use of performance as the legitimate criterion in making political decisions.

Popular sovereignty can be viewed as the keystone of regime norms in modern democracies. Certain other norms, notably majority rule and minority rights, serve to "operationalize" popular sovereignty. Put another way, the norms of majority rule and minority rights prescribe how--by what procedures--popular sovereignty is to be effected or exercised. How successful these procedures are depends to a large extent on whether or not the members of the political system consistently accept both norms: majority rule when they are part of the minority, and minority rights when they are in the majority.

Learning these norms is facilitated by the structure of the school. We have indicated how this structure fosters the development of the quality of empathy. This is precisely the quality which is essential to the inculcation of the norm of minority rights. One must be able to see oneself in the other fellow's shoes, to feel what it is like to be in the minority. One who, as part of the majority, might be tempted to abandon or abolish the procedures which protect the rights of the minority--notably freedom of speech and the right to dissent--has only to take their role to realize the soundness of preserving those rights.

In the case of majority rule, it is essential that the minority ultimately accept the legitimacy of the majority's decision. To be able to do this one must be able to persuade himself that his own personal interest in subordinate to the interests of the majority. Doing this is dependent on the ability to take the role of the other. In this case, it is imperative that the individual be able to consider his actions from the perspective of a generalized other of equals. Such a perspective, for example, would arouse a negative self-image should the individual be considering actions which would be personally beneficial, but which would illegitimately thwart the desires of the majority. Thus, the probability of such actions is decreased.

It is apparent, when one examines the norms of majority rule and minority rights, that a tension exists between the two. Indeed, the two are, in a certain sense, contradictory. On the one hand, there is the demand for individual liberty--minority rights--and on the other the demand for acquiescence to the majority. No hard and fast rule can be set to determine how far liberty can go before authority must be evoked. Rather, the limits must be defined for each situation as it arises. The testing of these limits through trial and error goes on throughout the child's experience in school. With both the teacher (his superior) and his classmates (his equals) he tests the degree to which he can exert influence and secure his individual desires and the degree to which he must acquiesce to the authority and desires of others.

The social-psychological consequences of elementary school structure also have implications for children's attitudes toward political authorities. There is now abundant evidence that children as young as seven perceive political authorities as essentially benevolent. For example, very young children are likely to agree that the President "would always want to help me if I needed it."[24]

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[24] Hess and Torney, op. cit., p. 41.

This attribution of benevolence to political authorities may be an extremely important aspect of political socialization. Hess and Torney's results indicate that while this attitude among children declines sharply with increasing age, it nevertheless remains at a high level.[25] (Teachers as a group rated the President as slightly more benevolent than did eighth graders.)

> It is possible that early belief in the benign qualities of political authority sets a level of expectations that is never completely abandoned. As a maturing child becomes aware of the fallibility of persons in authority, he looks to institutions for the protection he formerly sought from parents and personal figures."[26]

These attitudes toward political authority may be an important element in the stability of a political system. They may provide a fundamental set toward accepting the actions of authorities and institutions as legitimate, a set which carries into adulthood and which acts as a powerful force against revolutionary change in the system. We have suggested that to the degree to which children generalize attitudes toward political figures from those authorities with whom they have daily contact, the social structure of the school facilitates political socialization by providing children with early experience with benevolent authorities--one is tempted to say benevolent despots.[27]

Finally, we have pointed out that the structure of the elementary school can provide ample opportunity for children to develop a sense of personal

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25 loc. cit.

26 Ibid., p. 45

27 Our preliminary data clearly substantiate young childrens' perceptions of teachers as benevolent: The major assumption is generalization of attitudes. Hess and Torney have proposed a different model of this process, based on the vulnerability children presumably feel before adult authority figures.

efficacy. They may be able to develop and practice various sorts of influence techniques appropriate to peers and authorities. In a regime based on popular participation and control, a feeling of political efficacy on the part of citizens is essential. Those who perceive their political actions as effective are not only more likely to engage in such actions, they may be better informed politically and hence further increase their effectiveness.[28]

It should be noted that the same structure which can provide opportunities for the development of a sense of efficacy in children also provides ample opportunities for the development of a sense of powerlessness and cynicism. The provisions for standardization, discipline, and control which are built into the school structure can as easily frustrate efficacy, stifle dissent, and reward conformity. While acceptance of authority as well as individual efficacy is crucial to the persistence of the political system, the school may provide greater reinforcement for subject attitudes than for participant attitudes. The child who consistently finds himself unable to influence authority may feel first helpless and then cynical.

In summary, we suggest that the social structure of the elementary school helps to ensure the internalization of attitudes and beliefs in children which later facilitate their assumption of political roles. The development of a sense of community, the inculcation of norms basic to the functioning of the political regime, and belief in the benevolence and legitimacy of the actions of political authorities are all aspects of political socialization which seem to be intrinsic to the process of schooling.

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[28] Melvin Seeman, "Powerlessness and Knowledge: A Comparative Study of Alienation and Learning," Sociometry, 30 (June, 1967), 105-23.

It has long been assumed that the childhood years were an apolitical period of life. Research is conclusive in demonstrating that this assumption is no longer tenable. Precisely because these basic political attitudes and beliefs are learned early in life, is the reason that they may be important in later political behavior. The broad outline of the political socialization process is beginning to take shape. The role of the school in this process has yet to be determined. A cherished American doctrine, now rejected by many educators, has been that schools should "keep out of politics." It may be that schools are already in politics in a much more fundamental way than we have as yet recognized.